



## TURTLE SAFETY TIPS

Turtles are not safe pets for young children. They should not be kept in the home, at childcare centers, preschools, or in early childhood education programs.

Do not buy a turtle (less than 4 inches in width), especially if you are pregnant, if you have children under the age of 5, or if you have any chronic health problems. *Salmonella* germs can survive for weeks on surfaces and objects (such as clothing, carpets, and toys).

If you already have a turtle, follow the tips below for child and turtle safety:



Wash your hands after each time you touch, hold or clean your pet, its cage or food.

Keep your turtle's living area clean.



Do not bathe your turtle in the kitchen sink or next to places where you keep and cook your food.

Do not allow children under the age of 5 to play with turtles.



Avoid contaminating the bathtub. Always sanitize the area where you clean the turtle or its equipment.

Do not put your turtle into a local lake if you no longer want it. Instead, call a turtle organization or the City Animal Control Department.



Find out how to take good care of your pet turtle because a sick turtle sheds more *Salmonella* and that's more dangerous! Visit <http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/acd/Diseases/Reptiles.htm>

For more information about Reptile-Associated Salmonellosis, please contact the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd>  
Telephone (213) 240-7941 (Ask for the Health Education Unit)

# DANGER: TURTLES!



## NOT A KID'S BEST FRIEND!

# REPTILE- ASSOCIATED SALMONELLOSIS



Turtles and other reptiles such as tortoises, lizards and snakes are carriers of a germ called *Salmonella*, which can make children very sick, causing fever, chills, diarrhea, nausea and sometimes vomiting.

The following story is based on real events.

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Reptile-associated Salmonellosis Working Group



Office of Diversity and Cultural Competency



Health Services



Hola, Sonia!  
Dios! I'm so happy my son is better. I have learned a hard lesson. You are healthy and your kids are all grown up. Would you like to have our pet turtle? The doctor said he carries germs, which are dangerous for kids under the age of 5. Families with young kids should not have pet turtles.

Sure! I love turtles!  
I even know a veterinarian who takes care of reptiles. He can help teach me the best way to care for it.

I feel so much better now. We're doing the right thing.

# THE END

At the appointment...

Mrs. Diaz, we are going to test your son for salmonellosis. Here is a formula to hydrate him. Call me if he gets worse.



Thank you, Doctor Romero!

Three days later at a follow-up appointment...

Mrs. Diaz, your son tested positive for salmonellosis. Continue to give him the formula I gave you at the last appointment. He should be fine.



Thank you, doctor! I never knew turtles were so dangerous for small children. I will try to spread the message to my community.

Here, mi amor. Drink this. We will have to give Henry away to Tía Sonia because he made you so sick.



Okay mama, but I'm a little sad to say goodbye to Henry.

Can we go to the zoo tomorrow?

One Sunday morning, Lorena Diaz and her son Antonio went to the local swap meet and bought something that they thought would be a great addition to their home. Soon they would discover that it was a dangerous mistake...

# SWAP MEET

EVERY SATURDAY  
AND SUNDAY

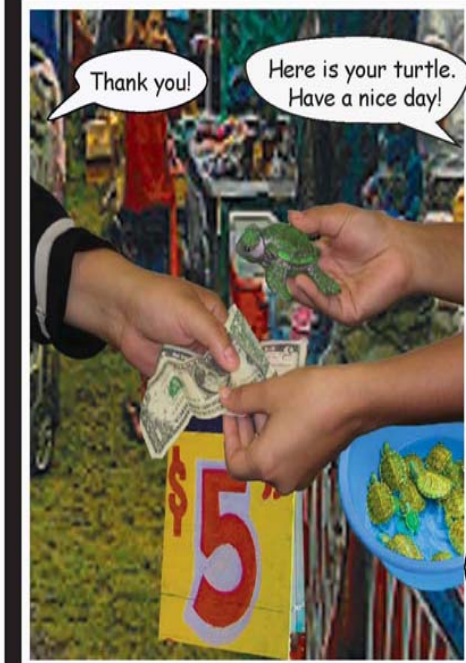




Look at the turtles, Antonio. Do you want to take one home?

Good morning! Would you like to buy a baby turtle? Come take a look!

They are a great pet for your child and very cheap!



Thank you!

Here is your turtle. Have a nice day!



Henry! I can't wait to play with him!

Do you like your new turtle, Antonio? What are you going to name him?



The only thing I can think of is the baby turtle I bought at the swap meet yesterday. Could that be it?

It is possible that your son has a *Salmonella* infection. Baby turtles carry this germ, which is easily spread and can be dangerous for young children. Bring him to the clinic immediately!



Dios! I'm missing work again! How am I going to pay the rent?

Oh no! I never knew a baby turtle could be so dangerous! I better call work to tell them I'm not coming in today.



Oh look! We've arrived! Hold on, sweetheart.

The next evening...

Mama! My stomach hurts!

Mijo! What's wrong?

I don't feel well mama.

Oww! Oww!

Doctor, I am very worried. My son is very sick with diarrhea and a fever. What could be wrong?

Oh no!  
You have a fever!  
I'm going to go call  
the doctor.

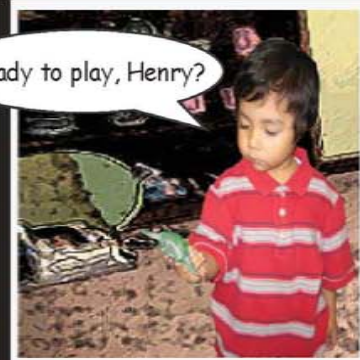
Has he been exposed  
to anything new,  
like food or a pet?



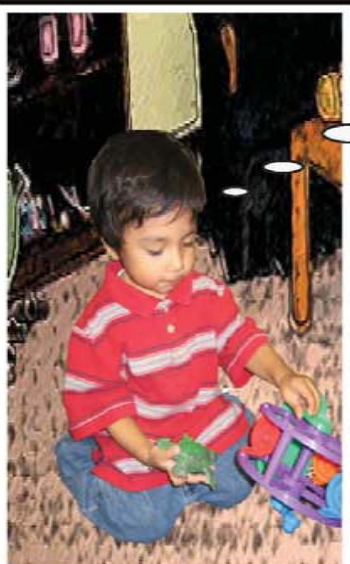
What a cute baby turtle  
you have! Let's play with  
Henry inside! I have some  
snacks for you, too.

Look, Tía Marta!  
Look! I have a new  
pet named Henry!

Ready to play, Henry?



Vrooooooom!!!!



Having a turtle is so much fun!  
I wonder if mama will let him swim  
in the bathtub with me tonight.



Antonio was having lots of fun...



but things would change soon...

Time for bed, amor. Did you have a fun day with your new pet?

